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BELIEFS REGARDING THE SOUL AND THE FUTURE WORLD AMONG THE GALICIAN UKRAINIANS

775 THE departed soul, it is believed by the Ukrainian peasant, does not enter the other world immediately, except in the case of baptized children. It accompanies its body to the place of burial,[1] and returns home with its relatives.[2] When the mourners leave the cemetery, therefore, they are careful to follow the same route as on the outgoing journey, so as not to cause the soul any inconvenience; otherwise it might lose its way, and wander around before finding its way home.[3] Moreover, when the rela-

113 [1] Onyščuk, A. "Materyaly do huculskoï demonologii," *Materyaly do Ukrainskoï Etnologii*, xi (Lviw, 1909), 48.

[2] Szuchiewicz, W., *Huculszczyzna*, (Lwów, 1902-08, 4 vols.) ii, 275.

[3] *Ibid.*, ii, 275.

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775 tives and guests sit down to their post-funeral dinner—a meal nearly as elaborate as that at a christening or a wedding [4]—a candle, preferably one used at the funeral, is lit and put on the oven, and beside it are placed a glass of brandy and a morsel of bread, in the conviction that the soul will thus participate in the meal.[5] The mountaineers, for a similar reason, usually scatter a little flour on the table and window sill. In the morning they even prove that the soul has touched the flour by pointing to traces which have unquestionably been left by cockroaches and flies.[6] For several days, bread and brandy or water are offered anew each day.[7] In some localities the relatives visit the grave on the third day after the funeral, and place upon it little loaves of bread, cheese, milk, flour, dried prunes, or other foods. After the priest, who is present on such occasions, has finished his prayer, the food is distributed among the poor.[8] On a Sunday a few weeks later, if possible on Easter Sunday, the visit to the grave and the food offering are repeated.[9] These sacrifices to the dead, called *mesoczky* or *perepiczky*, can be explained in two possible ways; either as gifts of food for actual consumption by the dead, or—as is more likely—as attempts to propitiate the ghost, especially a vampire, and thus escape its evil influences.[10] The people are totally unaware of the meaning of the practice. When asked for an explanation, they reply: "*Tak si hodyt*" (this is as it should be).

Before departing for the other world, the soul roams about on earth for forty days, during which time it makes nightly visits to its former home.[11] According to some, it must spend seven years on earth and revisit all the places where during its lifetime

113 [4] Kolberg, O., *Pokucie*, (Kraków, 1882-89, 4 vols.), i, 219.

[5] *Ibid.*, i, 219.

[6] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 275.

[7] Kaindl, R. F. "Die Seele und ihr Aufenthaltsort nach dem Tode in dem Volksglauben der Rutenen und Huzulen," *Globus*, lxvii (Braunschweig, 1895), 358.

[8] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 277.

[9] Kaindl, R. F., *Die Huzulen* (Wien, 1894), p. 129.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 127 n.

[11] Kaindl, in *Globus*, lxvii, 357.

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it did anything good or bad.[12] During its nightly visits to its old home it enters the room quietly, even though the doors and windows be shut, uncovers the children and rocks them, and sometimes plays practical jokes on the members of the family.[13] It retains the power to harm, however, only for one year after the funeral, and the members of the family consequently fear it most during this period.[14] Especially must it be guarded against on the night following the funeral. On this night the members of the household of the deceased must not go to sleep, but must continue their vigil as in the two preceding nights. Although some of the participants in the post-funeral dinner leave after a few hours, others remain in the house to keep the mourners company. In order to keep awake, the watchers resort to various tricks to evoke laughter and ban sleep. As soon as one dozes off, for example, another smears soot on his face, fastens a rag to his coat, or sews his coat to that of another, and the ensuing laughter causes the napping one to awake.[15]

The other world, it is believed, is very distant, and the journey thither takes many days. The mountaineers believe that the soul travels on horseback,[16] and that the road is beset with obstacles and strewn with thorns. To reach the other world the soul must also cross a fathomless sea. If it is deserving, the Mother of God carries it over the water in a tightly woven net.[17]

The peasant conceives the future world in terms of the one he lives in. In heaven, people continue their daily existence much as they did on earth. They lead, to be sure, a life "where neither the burning sun, nor wind and storm disturb the perfect tranquility." But they occupy houses exactly like those found in the native villages, and they eat food which differs in no way from the regular peasant diet. Shepherds busy themselves tending cattle upon rich pastures, and tillers of the soil do their

[12] Onyšćuk, *op. cit.*, xi, 48.

[13] Kolessa, J., "Narodziny i chrzciny, wesele i pogrzeb u ludu ruskiego," *Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej*, xiii, (Kraków, 1889), 150.

[14] *Ibid.*, xiii, 150.

[15] Kolberg, *op. cit.*, i, 219.

[16] Kandi, in *Globus*, lxvii, 358.

[17] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 274.

715 work in fertile wheat fields. They differ from people on earth chiefly in that their faces are eternally beaming with happiness.[18]

The other world is divided into paradise (*raj*) and hell (*peklo*) The latter is divided into two parts—a hot and a cold region. The hot hell, where the fire is sevenfold stronger than on earth, is the abode of all sinners save those who failed to observe the fast days. These go to the cold hell, where a continuous frost prevails such as is experienced on earth only during the severest winters. Paradise is above the clouds, in heaven. Hell, on the other hand, is situated in the centre of the earth, and the road to it leads through impassable swamps and marshes. The throne of God, before which all souls must appear for judgment, is the point of departure for both paradise and hell. Thence lead two ladders, one up and the other down. By the former, the souls of the righteous climb to the abode of everlasting bliss; by the latter, those of the damned descend to the land of eternal torture.

Paradise is an immense, sunny meadow, the entrance to which leads through a door in the clouds. There the cottages of the souls are found, but all are occupied, so that a newcomer must usually wait three days in the judgment hall until God arranges a suitable place for him.[19] Hell, on the other hand, is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. There Satan rakes the eternal fire of sulphur and pitch in which sinners are tormented. The infernal punishments have naturally been influenced greatly by Christian visualization of retribution in the other world, especially by the gruesome scenes displayed even now in pictures in some of the older village churches.[20] To describe them would be superfluous. The peasant harbors, however, some independent and original ideas regarding future punishment which are worth considering, especially since they give an insight into his conception of what acts are sinful and what means of punishment are appropriate.

The principle underlying the peasant's conception of reward and punishment is "like should be paid with like." Thus, miserly people, especially those who have been too stingy to

[18] Kaindl, in *Globus*, lxvii, 358.
[19] *Ibid.*, lxvii, 359-60. [20] *Ibid.*, lxvii, 361.

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715 present sound cattle to their godchildren, are punished by having only miserable herds in the other world, despite the rich pasture land given to them, while the generous enjoy beautiful cattle, although their meadows are poor. An inconsiderate person, one who would not help another even with a drink of water, is punished by having to lean over a well, fill a glass with water, spill it and refill it again, perpetually repeating this never-ending task. The selfish rich man or "baron," who, while alive, refused to share his spacious home with the poor or to offer them food when they knocked at his door, must ever run to and fro in an empty dismal palace, knocking his head against the wall each time he approaches it, as if trying to break through the walls in order to escape into the free, sunny world where one can enjoy human companionship. The unscrupulous village judge, who used to spend his time in the tavern drinking, is compelled in the future world to drink incessantly the tears of the innocent whom he convicted. Strife over inherited property is punished by turning the heirs into dogs who eternally tug at a corpse from opposite directions. A woman who has committed infanticide must cook the flesh of her child and eat it, repeating the process endlessly, since every Saturday the child is made whole again. A murderer, finally, forever tries to grasp the soul of his victim, who, in the form of a bird, flies in and out of the holes of a tree trunk (the wounds and body of the murdered person), but eternally fails in his endeavour.[21]

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